DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 985 IR 052 433

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TITLE User Education: How To Teach It.
INSTITUTION International Federation of Library Associations, The Hague (Netherlands).
PUB DATE Aug 87
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Pre-Session Seminar on International Colloquium on Education and Training of Library, Information and Archival Personnel (London, England, August 10-14, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Influences; Developing Nations; Educational Innovation; *Educational Objectives; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Information Needs; Learning Processes; Librarians; *Library Education; *Library Instruction; Needs Assessment; Professional Education; Socioeconomic Influences; Technological Advancement; *User Needs (Information); *Users (Information)
IDENTIFIERS Latin America

ABSTRACT

This analysis of how to educate information professionals in the work of educating users, and why it is desirable to do so, begins by presenting a general discussion of who the information users are, why they use information, and how information professionals can contribute to educating and helping citizens in Latin America to achieve a better way of life. The paper then discusses the basic factors to be considered in a program of educating information professionals to educate users, including general and specific objectives, what to teach to users, prerequisites, and course contents. A 16-item bibliography is provided. (CGD)

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PRE-SESSION SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARY, INFORMATION & ARCHIVAL PERSONNEL

1987

LONDON, 10-14 August 1987

182 PRESESSION
14-E

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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USER EDUCATION: HOW TO TEACH IT.

BY

MOISES PEDRAZA

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USER EDUCATION: HOW TO TEACH IT

MOISES PEDRAZA

PART I

GENERAL OUTLINING FOR THE USERS EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

This paper is directed to the analysis of why and how to educate information professionals in the work of educating users. In that sense, it is divided in two parts: the first one propose a necessary outlining to construct a conception of the users education problematic and the specific action to be developed about education of information professionals for users education, and the second one, holds the basic aspects to be considered within the program of educating information professionals to educate users.

It is convinient to clear that the concept here presented is global, without particularizing archives or libraries, understanding the librarian, the archivistic, the documentalist in the general term of information professional.

THE PROFESSIONAL ROLE

Which is the role, the objetive of the profession? Is, to make that more and better information be used by individuals and by the whole society. This role would be incomplete, if we do not ask ourselves about the sense, the why and for what of the use of information.

What sense does it has a greater use of information for Colombia and Latin Aamerica? Particularly Colombia and Latin American countries are trying to solve great problems, due to the fact that more than half of the population has not even yet solved minimum aspects about nutrition, health, lodging and education. Behind, these countries have low productivity, and do not have exportable exceedings to allow them to generate holdings and create infraestructures, so in consecuence, the external debt is strangulating them. Within this panorama, in Latin America a great experience has benn accumulated and exists the attitude of searching activities, some of them extreme, others moderate, but in a general way there is an attitude of searching solutions and proper models to replace industrialized policies and imposed models through the last 50 years.

We may say then, that our profession has sense in Latin America in the way it contributes to solve the basic problems we have, and contributes too to look for an alternative solutions in an independent and free way.

DOES THE INFORMATION USE MUST BE TAUGHT

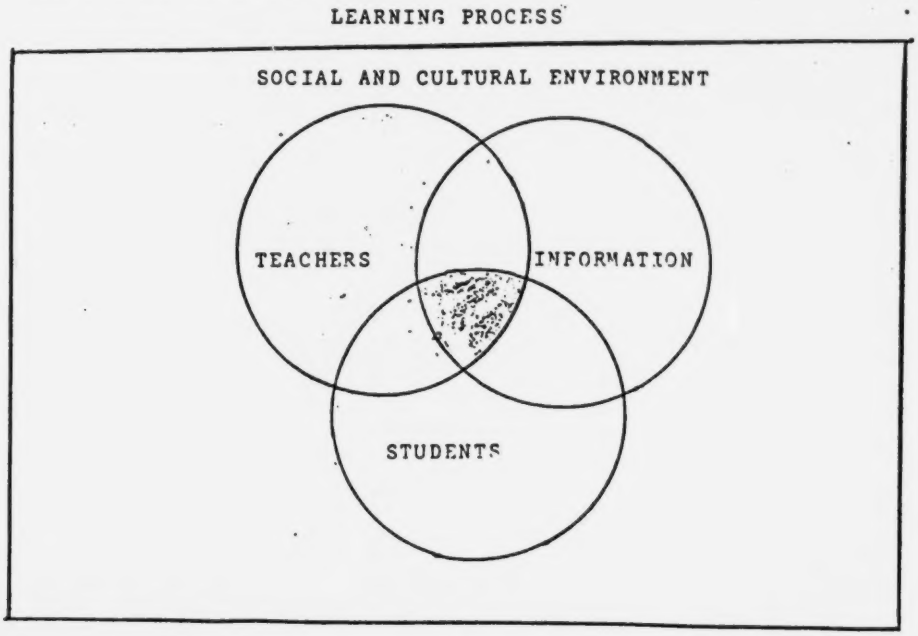
Based on the above mentioned, in which the objetive of the profession is, that persons and the society make more and better information use, which means that if users come to our libraries, that they read, that every institution opens a library, that researching programms are increased, that the issue of scientific and technical magazines increase, and the edition of books is millionarie, and we may say that this is the cause and the consecuence of a better way of life of the Latin American society, if this occurs, our profession is being prosperous. If not, and the behavior of the above indicators is negative, the poverty conditions, the economical and social confusion increases, we may conclude that our profession has been lost.

We are on the market, we are selling a product from which the survival of the profession depends. We depend on the grade of consumption of the product, and the success of the product depends on the utility and impact it is going to cause in the Latin American society and in its change process.

Convinced in the need of information for the development of social process, are we acting the right way if we do not promote or show it? Evidently, if we want information to be used, we have the need of letting pleople know it exists and the advantages of knowing how to use it, as well as the disadvantages of no using it. We must create, awake, increse the need of information as a successful activity.

WHO NEEDS TO USE INFORMATION

The basic characteristic of the human being, is its capacity to use information, and to generate new ways to understand himself and the rest of the world, the capacity to modify its behavior is based on the conscious use of information. This cultural process is known as educative process and organized within the educative system, either formal or informal. Which is the relation between information and education?



Although, it is argued that the information professional is not able to make users education, because he does not know the content of the asignature he teaches, then, I ask: who teaches the specialsts in a specific matter the information use? By the way, if the information professional is not the one who animates the process, then who must assume the leadership? Another different thing is that he needs an intedisciplinary aid.

HOW TO MAKE USERS EDUCATION

The following are some of the obstacles for the success of the users formation in our country:

a. Lack of a clear conception and the solution alternatives.

b. Users quantity. No matter, if only a particular institution, school, university, factory is taken, or if on the contrary, we take the figures of the educative system as a whole.

c. Contents of teaching of the different groups, by ages and by interests.

d. Disponibility of human and economic resources.

The removal of this obstacles implies a change of attitude, a change of strategy, a change in the conception of education of information users. The traditional model has been the information professional, who in an isolate form developes all the process and confront a users group. The following strategies are proposed as possible alternatives:

a. Shared and cooperative work.

In countries with limited resources, we cannot waste efforts making the same things in many institutions. Some important and complex work obliges to develop mixed programs, efforts and desires.

b. Interdisciplinary aid work.

The professional and the specialist are able to make the informaton concept joined to a specific asignature, but a third element will be missing: the communication and didact methodology component, so an specialized didact methodologican is needed. Work must be gestate, oriented, leadered and managed by the librarian, but carried out with other specialists in an interdisciplinary team what will assure a high quality product.

c. Take the need of behaviors, knowledge in the use of information to curriculums of the different levels in education.

Within the new educative conceptions in which the educative system must teach how to study, how to be, how to do, how to think, how to create, a fundamental strategy is to teach how to select, how to evaluate, how to analyze and how to obtain information. In this sense, since the first years the indivudual will be an information user, only in this way we will have an assured consumer for all his life, and a way of

Conceived the educative system as the process in which the individual goes on its own perspective comprising himself and the world, he is qualified to practise a free transformer capacity of himself and his reality, within an intensive process of knowledge, it is conclude that an esential matter is information.

In the same way the person who iniciates its educative process in the early years, the use or unuse of information is iniciated in the childhood and its last along its life, not only at school but in all his life. Up to where, the educative system teaches the individual how to interact with information or it inhibits its use, and up to where the librarian profession participate of the educative systems objetives? Are we teachers from the perspective of information?

From here the universe, the objet population, the potential market as consumers of information, as educators is all the population, and all people has the right to be educated in a free way of accessing information. Generally, the problem of teahing the use of information has been limited to some investigators, university teachers or engineers of technical firms, that often make use of information. In some developed countries an important work is being done at the primary and highschool education. Nevertheless, in Colombia and in some regional countries efforts are being made only at the highest level of the scale.

Almost everybody uses information in a major or minor grade, in the case of Colombia, 25 million people does, and it is and utopia to think about the world. We must be practical, racional or realistic and direct the efforts inicially toward formal and institutional systems of education and production. The following are the magnitudes in the educative field for 1986:

	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	LIBRARIANS
University	402.438	43.447	400 Univer. Librar.
Highschool	2'136.239	107.084	100 Publ. and Sch.
Primary	4'002.543	135.924	
	6'541.220	286.455	500

Users average by information professionals: 13.000

WHO MUST DO THE USERS EDUCATION

At the beginning we said that the professional role is to increase the information use as product, for the development of the soial process. Therefore, the direct interested in the more use of information is the information professional, and the principle responsible and protagonist. This does not mean that the only responsible about the information use are the information professionals, because each person and each professional is involucrate in the information problem and responsible for its solution.

PART II

INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR USERS EDUCATION

GENERAL OBJETIVE

Give the future professional elements to facilitate the development of education programs and users training.

We do not want the information professional to be a pedagogy expert nor an expert on an specific asignature, we are trying to give him the theorical and practical elements that allow him to assume an agent and promotor role on the education users, insteac of isolator executer. If he is going to receive didactic methodological elements, his principle role is:

1. Agent, orientator, promoter and manager of the users education.

2. Esential contribution in the decision of contents to be transmitted in the users education programs.

It is convenient to clear up that this objetive goes further from an asignature and must be one of the objetives of the career. This means that it must be searched on the different asignatures the objetive, among others, that the future professional be able of remind interest in information, create needs and give elements for users education.

SPECIFIC OBJETIVES

At the end of the users education course, who has taken it must be able to:

a. Determine the relation between information and education.

b. Determine the general users education problematic and relate it with social-economic and educative aspects.

c. Be able to propose elements for an institutional policy, of users education locally and national.

d. Determine the relation between users education and use and unuse of information.

e. Generate and cause needs of information use.

f. Distinguish the basic characteristics of the different groups or levels of users to be capacitated and their methodological and content implications.

g. Proposal of methodologies to determine contents to be taught in a users education program.

h. Select the adecuate didactic methodology for a particularly group and its asociated technology.

doing it is that the behaviors, knowledge, and skills in the information use make part of the different curriculums. In the other hand, and since a practical point of view, due to the reduced number of information professional this is the only possible way to make users education. The information professional will make programs and design the basic resources, such as text books or helps, but teaching will be given by teachers from different areas.

WHAT TO TEACH TO USERS

Which behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, and skills do we pretend will be the result of the process? This is a principal aspect in the users formation and concerns basically the information professional. Within the great quantity of formation programs the methodology has not been the one who has failed, is the content.

In this point is convinient to point out an aspect, by an example: is it necessary to teach at the primary and highschool, the use of libraries when neither the primary nor highschools have libraries and there are few public libraries? But not because of this the teaching of information use will be left aside. Not only libraries have information. The purpose is to try to generate an information demand, later it will be seen if the best channel to satisfy this demand is the library or other organization.

What must be taught, according to age, teaching levels, professional and specific interests? What is the principal aspect of the information use? Is it only to inform, or up to what intelectual capacity levels, aptitudes or knowledge, according to different taxomanies in the teaching objetives, it is required to be taken to different levels on which the training is directed.

More than any other, this aspects requires an intensive cooperative work, not only national but internationally, and where the support of international entities is need.

i. Design or realize an instruction program.

j. Evaluate policies, actions, programs and resources used in users education.

k. Make interdisciplinary groups for the design and realization of programs in the users education.

l. Elaborate materials using audiovisual, automatized, personalized and other technologies.

m. Manage an user education program.

PREREQUISITE

- Known of the social, economical and political reality of the environment in which the users education is developed.
- Have a deep knowledge of the content of what he wants to teach.
- Handle of the research methodology that allows him to structurate a permanent program on research/action.
- Project formulation and evaluation.
- Knowledge of the national and international information policies.

CONTENTS

1. Why and what for of the users education on information.
   - Theorical concepts on education, pedagogy and didactic.
   - Reality of the educative system in the qualitative and quantitative aspects.
   - Education-information use relation.
2. Basic elements of a education users program.
   - Objetives definition:
     - Why to teach the use of information.
     - New behaviors to be generate.
     - Knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, that are expected to be generated.
   - Audience:
     - Who has the right to use information?
     - Groups and segments determination, objects of the teaching.
   - Contents:
     - Relation between contents and the specific asignature about the teaching of handling of information.
     - Analysis on content in relation with the audience.

- Methodology:
  - Didactic methodologies.
  - Expression and communication forms.
  - Technologies.

- Programs execution.

- Evaluation.

3. Administration of users education programs.

- Needs analysis.
- Project reach.
- Human and economic resources.
- Work methodologies.
- Stages.
- Products and subproducts.
- Evaluation and control.

4. The users education at national and international level.

- Committees and work groups, of national and international associations.
- Cooperative programs.
- Information sources about users education.

5. Methodology.

The proposed methodology for this program must be research-action.

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